



# CHRISTENSEN'S PLANT CENTER

## Wholesale Supplier To Landscape Professionals

### The Real Deal on fall clean-ups

I'm a fervent believer in a minimalist approach to fall "clean-ups" in the landscape. Too many people cut back shrubs and perennials way too early in the season. While many plants look dormant in November, nutrients and sugars are still migrating into the root systems well into December. I remember M.S.U. Professor Bob Schutzski mentioning years ago that studies were showing a gain of 5% to 10% in plant vigor the following spring if the foliage was not cut back until winter.

Let's look at some other reasons to "leave them be" until March.

Leaving grasses and perennials uncut gives some nice visual interest during the winter. Animals are often able to utilize seed heads or pods for food, when they need it most. Another reason most people don't consider is that the foliage catches rain and more importantly, blowing snow. This will increase the moisture content of often dry beds in the spring. Extra snow will also help insulate your plant's roots from stress and heaving due to the freeze/thaw cycles.

At my home, fall clean-up consists of only removing the heavy leaf drop from the many deciduous trees, in my numerous ornamental beds, as well as the lawn. Maple leaves will also form dense mats that can really smother some plants.

Lastly, waiting until March/April to cut back gives you billable hours for your maintenance clients when you need those hours the most.



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